

Nail Polish and Cigarettes by [littlefaerielights](#)

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Summary:

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"What're you thinking about?" Nancy asked, closing the bottle of nail polish. He examined his hand and realized black was probably his favorite color that she'd painted his nails so far. Well, a very close second to the blue she painted two weeks ago because apparently that was Will's favorite color—

and back to the crisis at hand.

"Do you have a cigarette?"

Nancy considered him for a minute. Mike sighed and blew on his nails, waiting for his sister to fucking answer him because he really needed a damn cigarette. "Wait for your nails to dry, then you can have a smoke." She said, taking his hands gently in hers and setting them in front of the pink fan on the floor.

"What if I'm like, *really* careful?"

"Patience, Mikey." She shook her head, jumping up and grabbing a blanket from her closet. Mike watched her bunch it up at the bottom of her door before stepping over him to open the window. He shivered at the rush of cool air. Mike was getting fidgety as he waited for his nails to dry and it felt like Nancy was rubbing it in that she could move and do whatever she wanted without fear of ruining anything. She grabbed her bag from her desk and sat on the floor, rummaging around in it for a few minutes.

"What are you looking for?"

"I bought you a pack, because I know you don't really like what I smoke." She shrugged.

"I love you."

"I know, I know." she found a new pack of menthols and waved it in Mike's face before tossing it to the table next to the window. "Let me see your hands." Nancy gently took one of his hands and carefully ran her fingers over his nails. She smiled at him. "Okay. You're good."

"Fucking finally." He groaned.

"Be careful, though! You could still mess them up." Nancy warned.

"I *know*, Nance." Mike rolled his eyes, wrapping one of her shawls around himself as he crawled up onto her window seat. He grabbed his pack and ripped the cellophane off before taking a cigarette out and looking at his sister. "I need a lighter." He said, an unlit cigarette hanging from his lips.

"Are you okay?" she asked, zipping a hoodie up and jumping up onto the seat across from him. He raised an eyebrow, hand outstretched. She rolled her eyes and reached over to light it for him.

"Thank you." he sighed after taking a drag. Nancy rolled her eyes and lit her own cigarette.

"You gonna tell me what's going on in that head of yours?" she asked, nudging him with her foot. Mike leaned against the wall and sighed.

"I think—" he chewed on his lip. He wasn't *gay*, was he? No. He *couldn't* be, because he liked girls! He liked El, they'd dated for almost a year. He liked making out with Sarah at that party last summer. And Lindsay from his English Lit class was just so fucking pretty, it really shouldn't be allowed. And Katie from calc. They got high in her basement and well, one thing led to another and...

Anyway, girls were *pretty* and *soft*. Mike liked girls! Right?

But he also liked Tucker in gym because like, *fuck*. He had a *good*

fucking body and well, um, that's exactly what Mike wanted to do. And he imagined running his fingers through Kyle's hair in Spanish. And fucking Josh's lips in chem looked so damn *kissable*. But that wasn't all, because he had a *serious* fucking problem. *Will*. His heart seemed to want to beat out of his chest whenever he saw him and all the air in his lungs seemed to disappear when he walked into the room and not to fucking mention the butterflies or maybe fucking angry bees that seemed to appear in his stomach and chest whenever he talked to him.

So, yeah, you could say Mike had a little big crush on his best friend.

"Can you like boys and girls at the same time?" Mike rephrased his question because he was like, eighty percent sure he wasn't gay. Because like, girls were nice and soft and pretty, but like... boys were still pretty, obviously, but like, sharp and all edges and rough? *Oh*. Did Mike like rough? Will wasn't exactly *rough*. Will was soft, like his favorite sweater—but Will was *different*. Will was always different. Nancy tilted her head at him, a small smile tugging at her lips.

"Of course it is." She smiled. Mike sighed in relief. "It's called bisexual." She smiled.

"There's a name for it?" he whispered.

Nancy nodded quietly.

"So there's nothing wrong with me?" Mike asked quietly and he could feel his eyes filling with tears. Nancy smiled sadly and pulled him into her arms. He curled up on her lap like he did when he was little and she ran her fingers through his hair while he cried.

"There's nothing wrong with you, Mikey." She said softly. "You're okay. It's *okay*. I promise. You're perfect." She leaned down and pressed a kiss to his forehead. They sat like that for a while. Mike found comfort in his older sister's words because he was *so fucking scared* there was something wrong with him. You weren't supposed to like boys *and* girls, right? Like, that's not A Thing. Except it is and there's a fucking word for it and he's *not* broken and he's *okay*. But that's why the *whole crush on Will* situation was so hard to process because like, he'd been with El and now he was having the same

feelings for Will?

No. Not the same feelings.

They were *so much stronger*.

“Nance?” Mike muttered without sitting up. She hummed her response, still calmly running her fingers through his hair. “Have any weed?”

“I have a few joints.” She shrugged. “But you have to get up so I can get them.” She lightly pushed on his shoulders and he sat back up on his knees. He lit a cigarette and swung his legs over so they were hanging out of the window. Nancy shot him a look over her shoulder as she dug through her bag. She found what she was looking for and crawled back onto the window seat. She took a joint out and lit it. She took a hit and held the smoke in her lungs while she passed it over to Mike. He smiled as he brought it to his lips. Nancy returned his smile as she blew the smoke out of the window. “What else is bothering you?”

“I *like* Will.” Mike said quietly after he blew out a cloud of smoke and picked his cigarette back up. And it felt *so good* to finally say it out loud. Nancy raised an eyebrow.

“Yeah, and it’s raining.” She said, leaning against the wall.

“What?”

“Sorry, I thought we were stating things that were obvious.” She smirked and Mike’s eyes widened. “Oh, Mikey, you’ve never been known for your subtlety.” She squeezed his knee.

“Oh, *fuck*, do you think he knows?” Because if Will knows how he feels, then—*first of all*, why did no one tell him that he obviously had a crush on his best friend? Because, like, really, if someone told him before this week, maybe he wouldn’t be freaking out so fucking much.

Nancy laughed. “He’s so fucking oblivious.” She paused to take a hit off of the joint and watched Mike finish his cigarette. “The others probably know, though.” She said through a cloud of smoke.

“*Fuck.*” Okay, scratch that. If everyone else really did know, why aren’t they like, disgusted by him or something? Because—there was this voice in the back of his head that sounded suspiciously like his dad’s that kept telling him it was *wrong wrong wrong* to like another boy—shouldn’t they hate him for that?

“And if they don’t, at least Dustin does.” She shook her head, handing Mike the joint. “Kid’s too fucking intuitive for his own good.” Then she smiled kindly at him. “But, hey, Mikey, if they do know, they obviously *don’t* care.”

Well, his friends *did* have a tendency to surprise him.

“Yeah, but *Will.*”

“Will’s your best friend.” Why couldn’t Nancy understand that *that’s why he couldn’t have a crush on him?*

“Exactly!”

“You could do no wrong in the poor kid’s eyes.” Nancy assured him. “Like, you could probably stab him and he’d apologize for bleeding on your shirt.”

“Yeah, but this is *different*. Like, what do you do when you’re in love —“ he stopped and his eyes widened. “*fuck.*” He wasn’t *in love* with Will, was he? No. He *couldn’t* be. It was just a crush. A big crush, yes, but he wasn’t like, in love with him. That just wasn’t... he couldn’t be.

Nancy laughed and set the joint in the ashtray on her nightstand. “Mikey, *breathe*. You’re okay.”

“I don’t—“

“I think you do.” She spoke carefully. “Do you want to know what I see when I see you around him?” she asked gently. Mike paused before nodding slowly. Nancy nodded and turned him around so he was facing the window and sat behind him and started braiding his hair. He relaxed. “You look at him like he’s the only one in the room, and I mean, you two have always been kind of a little *touchy* with each other, and maybe that comes with knowing each other since you

were like, fucking five years old—or maybe with everything you guys have been through together with Will and the Upside Down, but like maybe for the last year? It's been *more*. I've seen you during your movie nights, and it's so fucking cute. You have Will like, practically curled up on your lap and you two practically gravitate towards each other. And don't think I don't hear you on the phone all night talking to him. Or sneaking out in the middle of the night.—if you're going to do that, fucking take your bike or park your car a little further away so mom and dad don't hear you, by the way. Also, I've noticed Will wearing like, at least four of your sweaters and like, at least half of your flannels? And sometimes when you guys start talking, it's like you're in your own world and kind of ignore everything else. Like, you're just so caught up in each other.”

Mike was blushing by the time Nancy was done speaking and he wasn't exactly ready to *really* talk about everything she said because he knew it was all true, so he decided to focus on the one thing he knew they could hopefully argue about for a few minutes. “Okay, who says it was *my* car? It could be like, a car just like, driving through the neighborhood or something.”

“Because I literally hear you say ‘I’ll be there in a few minutes’ and like, a minute later, I hear a car engine starting.” she smirked. “Also, it only takes like five minutes to drive to Will’s house and like twenty minutes to bike there.”

“Not if you bike like, hella fast.”

“The fastest *you* could get to Will’s on your bike is probably like, fifteen minutes. Maybe ten on a good day.”

“I don’t appreciate how little faith you have in me, Nance.” Mike crossed his arms. “I thought you’d be nicer to me after I came out to you and everything, but *no*, you’re still a bitch.”

Nancy laughed. “Gotta keep up appearances.” She kissed the top of his head. “But in all seriousness, I *am* proud of you.”

“I know. Thank you.” Mike smiled. But he still wasn’t ready to like, really talk about the whole Will thing yet, so. “What if those sweaters and flannels are Jonathon’s old ones?”

“I think you’re forgetting that I’m *dating* Jonathon, so I know what kind of clothes he wears. And also, you’re my *brother*, so I’ve seen you in those sweaters before.” She poked him. “You can’t fool me.” She paused and leaned around his shoulder to look him in the face. “I’m also like, ninety percent sure I’ve seen him in your favorite leather jacket that you *mysteriously* lost?”

Mike blushed and Nancy laughed. “It’s okay, Mikey, I think he looks cuter in your clothes, too.” Which was *true*. They were so big on him and gave him a serious case of sweater paws and it was so fucking adorable, he swore his heart was going to burst. And the flannels always hung off of his shoulders and it was beyond adorable and kind of stirred something up in Mike that he wasn’t ready to admit yet. Suddenly, a bottle of light purple nail polish was being waved in his face.

“What the fuck, Nance? You already painted my nails.”

“No, you dumbass. Have you not been listening?” she flicked his forehead. “You can paint my nails *if* you stop deflecting from the Will conversation *you* initially started.” She handed him the bottle. “Usually I wouldn’t push you to, but I can tell you need to talk about it, so, initiative.”

Mike took the bottle and sighed. “Okay.”

Nancy smiled and put her hand on his knee. “Alright, Mikey, talk.”

He rolled his eyes as he unscrewed the bottle and picked up her hand to paint her thumb. “I just.” He bit his lip and set her hand back down on his knee, carefully focusing on the task at hand. “I know you think if I say something to him, everything between us will be fine if he likes me back or not—but like, it’s *scary*. Because just the fact that I’m a guy and he’s a guy and like, what if he’s not gay or bi or whatever, you know? Like what if I tell him and he’s suddenly —“

“Oh, honey,” Nancy said softly, and Mike could hear the smile in her voice. “You don’t have to worry about *that*.”

“What?”

"You're so oblivious to everything, it's actually kind of sad." She ruffled his hair with her free hand and he could feel the tiny braids from earlier coming undone. He frowned.

"Nancy."

"Isn't Will being gay one of those unspoken things in your little Party that you kind of just all know, but don't really talk about?"

"If it is, I didn't fucking know about it." Mike stopped painting and looked up, because like, if that was actually true, fifty percent of his anxiety around this whole *Situation* would be gone.

"Yeah?" Nancy said slowly. "Kind of like how you two have been fucking dancing around each other for the last year but we all just wanted to let it play out on its own. I've talked to Ellie and Max about it."

Mike groaned. "What else do you know?"

"That's about it."

He sighed and went back to painting his sister's nails. "Okay, so, he won't hate me for liking guys." He muttered, starting on a second coat. "But he could hate me for ruining a friendship because we've been friends since *kindergarten*, and we've literally been through hell together, and I can't just ruin that because of a *stupid crush*—"

"Is it a stupid crush, Mike?"

"Okay, maybe not." he sighed and gently blew on Nancy's nails for a minute before picking up her other hand. "I'm so fucking *in love* with him and I'm so scared and I don't want to ruin what we have and I feel like that line has always kind of been blurred with us, you know? And all I know is I just want to *be with him* but I also don't want to lose him, though, because he's my *best fucking friend* and I literally don't think I can survive without him in my life. I don't know what it's like to *not love* Will Byers. I feel like it's apart of me?" Mike took a deep breath. "But I don't know when it went from *just loving him* to *being in love* with him." he focused on painting Nancy's nails because he was scared to look at her face. It was a good idea, he realized to

do this. It kept his hands steady and allowed him to focus on something other than the words kind of just *falling out of his mouth*. Why can't he just shut the fuck up? "Fuck, Nance, I just—like, I mean, if he doesn't love me like I love him, it's gonna hurt like hell, yeah, but it's okay. Because, really, I just really want Will to be *happy*. That's all he deserves, right? After everything he's been through?"

"You already make him happy, though." Nancy said softly.

"Yeah, but you know what I mean." Mike sighed and she squeezed his knee. "Stop moving!"

"Sorry." She muttered. "What—"

"I just—Nance, it's not *fair*, because even if I *did* tell him and he *does* love me back, it's not like we can go out in public together like you and Jonathan can, you know? And oh, *fuck*." He almost dropped the nail polish brush, because between *learning that there was a word for what he was* and *finally admitting out loud how he felt for Will*—"What about mom and dad?" because that was a genuine concern! They were really fucking conservative, like we're talking *god-fearing Christians* here. *Gay* is a bad word, the worst fucking thing you could be and holy shit, imagine if their son was? Because, really, are they going to hear that he *also* likes girls? No, as soon as the words "*I like boys*" comes out of his mouth, that's all that's going to matter.

"You don't have to tell them, Mikey." Nancy said softly.

And that was true. It was a good, valid option. Probably the safer option until he moved out. But that was two years away and Mike couldn't hide such a big part of himself away for such a long time. He didn't even know if he *could* hide, he wasn't like that. His parents knew about all that shit that happened with the demogorgon and the Upside Down and the mind flayer because Hopper ended up explaining it to them. In the end, they figured honesty was the best answer when it came to explaining why they were gone for almost a fucking week in '84 and how they had both kind of changed in '83. Their parents just pretended it didn't happen, and, really, wasn't that worse?

But if his parents could ignore the fact that Nancy and Mike had been to literal hell and back, maybe they could ignore the fact that Mike also liked boys. Because that was really *nothing* compared to killing monsters. But if Mike was being honest with himself, he knew that was wishful thinking. And the voice that sounded suspiciously like his dad reminded him that *liking boys was worse than killing monsters*.

“Yeah, I know.” Mike finally said. “But I want to. And logically, I know it’s not going to go well, because I keep hearing dad’s voice in my head telling me this is all wrong—but.” He looked at his hands and noticed how pretty the black nail polish looked in the dim lighting of Nancy’s room. He tried not to pick at it. “Maybe they’ll surprise us? I don’t know, but either way, I just know that I can’t hide such a big piece of me away, you know? Maybe if I’m lucky, they’ll just ignore this like they ignored the demogorgon.”

Nancy stared at him. “I don’t think you’ll get so lucky with this one, Mikey.”

Mike hummed and leaned back. “Wishful thinking, yeah?”

She laughed. “You’re wishing for a goddamn miracle if you’re hoping they just ignore this one.” she reached over and ruffled his hair.

“I know.” he shrugged. “And I’m not saying I’m going to do it like, now. But soon.” He nodded to himself and lit another cigarette. “Soon.”

“You sound so ominous.”

“I try.”

They collapsed in a fit of giggles before Nancy lay down on the window seat and propped her legs up on the wall, resting her head in Mike’s lap. He ran his fingers through his hair and she plucked the cigarette from his fingers and took a drag before passing it back to him. “Okay, Mikey, not like, pushing you or anything, but—Will?”

Mike sighed. “I don’t know, Nance.”

“I’m not going to push you to do it.” She said softly. “But I think you’d feel better if you did, you know?”

"I know." he took one last drag of his cigarette and put it in the ashtray and attempted to braid her hair. She was right, of course, because Nancy was usually right about most things. But he also didn't want to lose his best friend because of a stupid crush.

"I swear to god, Michael, if you knot it—"

"I'll brush it out." He rolled his eyes. "Let me live." They sat in comfortable silence for a little while. "Nancy?"

"Hmm?"

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"For being like, super chill about all of this." He smiled.

"You're my baby brother. I'll always be here for you." she squeezed his wrist and Mike rolled his eyes because he was not a baby. "I don't tell you this often enough, Mikey, but I love you."

"I know, Nance. I love you, too."